THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

connections

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

Law Day events emphasize importance of the Charter

Once again, Law Day was a success! Every April, the Canadian Bar Association opens up law courts across the country to the public to learn about the law, the legal profession and our legal institutions. The national event is held in April to commemorate the signing of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on April 17, 1982.

This year, the 35th Anniversary of the Charter, organizers across the country emphasized the importance of our democracy and the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter including freedom of religion, expression and association and the protections from unreasonable search or seizure, arbitrary detention and cruel and unusual punishment. The discussion was timely and a good opportunity for the public to learn more about our justice system and legal protections.

Events were held at the Winnipeg, Brandon and Morden courthouses and included displays, guided tours, mock trials, and high school debates.

Beatrice Watson meets with students in Winnipeg.

The Commission participated along with other agencies at the Winnipeg and Brandon events to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion and protection from discrimination. We were happy to speak with so many students and other members of the public about our work.

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan, Executive Director & Counsel

With the 2016-2017 fiscal year at an end and the government-wide emphasis on "red-tape reduction", we are reviewing our processes and how we serve the public.

Over the last year we spent time making internal changes to ensure that we could meet the strategic priority of improving our customer service. Many of these changes are not particularly notable to the public and involve software changes, accounting and administrative process changes, technology upgrades and an overall accessibility review. However, when put together, they have impacted the ability of our 20-person staff to deliver our mandate in a timely and efficient manner.

With many of these changes fully-implemented and and new staff on board, we are optimistic that we will be able to meet our customer service objectives.

Ultimately, we want any person who feels they have been discriminated against to have a place they can contact for information and assistance in filing a complaint. We want to ensure our processes are easy to navigate and that our staff continue to treat all parties with understanding, expert knowledge and professionalism.

Recognizing that there is always room to improve our processes and to better deliver our mandate has allowed us to push the Commission forward in a positive way into 2017-2018.

With much appreciation

The Commission bids farewell to Commissioner Karen Banuga from Brandon, Manitoba.

Karen was appointed in 2008 and served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board for several years. She was also previously Chair of the Legislation & Policy Committee, tasked with developing policy to intepret *The Human Rights Code* and identifying possible amendments to *The Code*.

The Board meets regularly to make decisions about whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant a complaint being referred to an independent adjudicator for a final decision that may include a remedy for the complainant.

The Board also provides overall strategic direction on current and emerging issues and oversees the Commission's education activities and the overall promotion of human rights.

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New Guideline:Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace

Although we have been moving to expand our resource platform to include social media, downloadable documents and a better web interface, it seems that some people still prefer an old-fashioned booklet to leaf through.

Based on feedback from the public, the Commission is has been revising and re-issuing its Guidelines. Popular Guidelines include Reasonable Accommodation, Discrimination against persons who use service animals and Discrimination based on Gender Identity.

The Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace Guideline has been revised to include new examples to work through and a focus on the rights and responsibilities of both the employee and the employer in an accommodation process.

We have found it useful in clarifying many of the myths and misunderstandings about the duty to accommodate in the workplace.

The Reaosnable Accommodation in the Workplace Guideline is available on the Commission's website but also as a downloadable pdf and in booklet format on request.

Over the next few months all 13 of the Commission's current Guidelines will have been revised and available to the public for distribution.

Visit our website or request a copy of the Guideline by contacting hrc@gov.mb.ca